

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 455
“AN ACT CONCERNING MINORITY RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION”
By Morgan Barth, Principal, AF Amistad High School
March 14, 2018

To Chairperson Fleischmann, Chairperson Slossberg, Chairperson Boucher, and members of the Education Committee:

My name is Morgan Barth. I serve as principal of AF Amistad High School in New Haven. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony today.

I write in strong support of **Senate Bill 455: “An Act Concerning Educator Certification Requirements for New, Experienced, and Interstate Teachers.”**

AF Amistad High is recognized by U.S. News & World Report as the #1 high school in the state of Connecticut. And 100% of our graduates receive acceptance to a college or university. **We are incredibly proud of the academic results that our students are achieving and the high levels of parent satisfaction and overall community support at our schools.**

These strong results are possible because we are deeply committed to making sure that each one of our nearly 700 students has a high-quality teacher. We know that the availability of multiple pathways to certification is an important part of ensuring that happens. **The importance of multiple pathways to certification is particularly true in light of the teacher shortage problems in Connecticut which is acute in specific subject areas, in the low-income communities we serve, and among teachers of color.** The status quo is concerning. Given the impact that this shortage will continue to have on schools with higher proportions of economically disadvantaged students, it is imperative that we create new options for talented and qualified candidates to enter the teaching profession.

We support Senate Bill 455 because it will give the State Department of Education (SDE) greater flexibility to grant candidates the initial or ongoing ability to teach based on factors such as mastery of a subject and documented results for students. The reality that we currently face is that candidates who we view as most qualified and ready to make a difference in the classroom are not always the ones who are certified. We meet this reality by recruiting the best teachers and then working with them to get certified or to receive a permit as quickly as possible; but these efforts take a tremendous amount of time and resources, and they serve as a deterrent when candidates are deciding whether or not to teach in Connecticut.

It has been a struggle to hire a diverse teaching staff that can meet the needs of our students. While we have had some success – including AF Bridgeport Academy, which is the second-most diverse teaching staff in Connecticut and has achieved tremendous academic results – we are confident that more flexibility will enable us to hire teachers that can best meet the needs of our school communities. **Thus, Senate Bill 455 builds upon the current system of multiple**

pathways and permits, but makes it stronger by adding flexibility and tying it to student results. We recommend that Senate Bill 455 be amended to allow its additional pathway for teachers and administrators, not just administrators, and that such pathway lead to professional certification so that strong educators with proven results can continue to work in Connecticut.

I am in no way advocating a lessening of the qualifications required of teachers. We ARE advocating a process that better enables schools to hire qualified teachers who get results for kids. This bill does that. **I support Senate Bill 455 because it creates additional avenues to bringing highly-effective educators into schools and into the classroom, and that is a big win for students everywhere.**